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Remarks

After the foregoing amendment, claims 1 – 32 are pending, with claims 1, 12, 13, 19, 21, 22, 30, 31, and 32 being the independent claims. Claims 1, 2, 4, 12, 13, 19, 21 – 23, and 30 – 31 have been amended. Applicants thank the examiner for a thorough search and review of the claimed subject matter.

37 CFR §1.105

Attached hereto is a copy of the AskJeeves.com webpage as of May 20, 2000. This copy was obtained from the <http://www.waybackmachine.org> website that archives internet websites.

35 USC §112

Claims 2 – 3 and 23 – 24 stand rejected under section 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Applicant has amended claims 2 and 23 accordingly to clarify the claim language. Applicant asserts that the amendments have not narrowed the scope of the elements that were amended. In view of the amendments, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejections pursuant to section 112, second paragraph be withdrawn.

35 USC §102

Claims 1 – 2, 10, 12, 21 – 23, and 29 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,539,377 (“Culliss”). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection. Independent claims 1, 12, 21, and 22 have been amended to clarify that the operational context is for a computer executed application. The Culliss reference does not describe identifying an operational context for a computer executed application, wherein the operational context is related to the question as claimed in amended claims 1, 12, 21, and 22. To the contrary, Culliss teaches that in the process of collecting (inferring) personal data about a user, that certain keywords can be identified from within a search request and then used to classify the user as someone interested in the subject matter of the keyword. For example, a user searching for items related to football or soccer can be identified by those keywords as a user interested in sports. Culliss’ disclosure of how to infer user interest from keywords in a search request does not fairly teach the claimed step of identifying an operational context of a computer executed application.

It appears from the office action that the Examiner considers the keyword from Culliss to anticipate the claimed operational context and the subsequent classification from Culliss to anticipate

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the claimed category. However, then the parsing of a keyword from a search string does not teach identifying an operational context for a computer executed application. This is because the context of the passage from Culliss is describing how to infer information about a user, not about a computer executed application. Additionally, the search string from Culliss comes from the user about which Culliss is inferring information. In the claimed invention, while the question comes from a user, the operational context that is identified is for the computer executed application that is associated with the question. Accordingly, Culliss does not teach the claimed identifying an operational context of a computer executed application, it merely teaches how to profile a user based on searches the user requests, queries the user makes, or URLs the user visits. Thus, Applicants submit that amended claims 1 – 12 and 21 – 19 are presently in condition for allowance.

Claim 13 stands rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,584,464 (“Warthen”). Applicants have amended claim 12 and respectfully traverse the rejection. Warthen does not teach and provides no disclosure related to the claimed suggestion module. Warthen teaches that its system includes a semantic net that is capable of breaking down a user entered question into a set of questions that are already present in a question-answer mapping table. Otherwise stated, Warthen teaches mapping a user entered question to a predefined template question.

The claimed suggestion module is not anticipated by these teachings in Warthen. To the contrary, the claimed suggestion module is adapted to provide a customized list of questions and answers based at least in part on a category that is associated with the user provided request for assistance. Warthen does not teach or fairly suggest that its list of template questions derived from the user entered question are based at least in part on a category that is associated with the user entered question. To the contrary, Warthen teaches that the template questions are predefined in a question-answer mapping table and that the user entered question is parsed for keywords that are normalized and then reduced into a normalized structure set. Warthen does not teach using a category that is associated with the user request to customize the provided list of questions and answers as required by claim 13. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claims 13 – 18 are presently in condition for allowance.

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Claim 32 stands rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,675,159 ("Lin"). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection. Lin does not fairly teach that questions with no associated answer are stored in a knowledge database and at least one new answer is received from administrative user for each of the unanswered questions stored in the knowledge database. To the contrary, Lin teaches that questions that cannot be answered return a response of "no documents found." (Column 11, Lines 64 – 65). If the system in Lin is to continue attempting to answer the question, then it creates a persistent agent to continue the search for responsive documents by examining all new documents and all newly located documents. (Column 12, Lines 11 – 15). Lin does not teach that an administrator provides an answer, as required by claim 30. Furthermore, Lin's teaching regarding a knowledge engineer (Column 12, Lines 19 – 29) does not suggest that the engineer provides an answer to any unanswered questions. That passage teaches that the knowledge engineer confirms that an unanswered query is a new concept. This does not answer the question, but rather allows the persistent agent to add the new concept to Lin's ontology and then monitor new documents as they are indexed and presumably include indications that a document is related to the newly identified concept. This teaching does not suggest that the knowledge engineer provide at least one new answer to an unanswered question stored in a knowledge database. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claim 32 is presently in condition for allowance.

35 USC §103

Claims 19 and 20 stand rejected under section 103(a) as being unpatentable over Culliss and Lin in view of Warthen. As previously set forth above, Culliss' disclosure related to inferring personal data about a user does not fairly teach identifying at least one category that is associated with the context of a computer executed application as required by independent claim 19. Culliss also fails to teach identifying an answer to a received question such that the answer is derived at least in part by using the identified category. Combining Culliss with Lin and Warthen does not cure the failings of Culliss to teach the claimed invention. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claims 19 and 20 are presently in condition for allowance.

Claim 30 stands rejected under section 103(a) as being unpatentable over Culliss in view of Warthen. As previously set forth above, Culliss' disclosure related to inferring personal data about a

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user does not fairly teach identifying a context of a computer executed application as required by claim 30. Nor does Culliss teach determining which of a plurality of categories is associated with the identified context of the computer executed application. Combining Culliss with Warthen does not cure the failings of Culliss to teach the claimed invention. Accordingly, Applicants submit that independent claim 30 is presently in condition for allowance.

Claim 31 also stands rejected under section 103(a) as being unpatentable over Culliss in view of Warthen. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection. Neither Culliss nor Warthen fairly teach or disclose that a category associated with a user question is determined based at least in part upon which web page among a plurality of web pages was most recently accessed by the user. Furthermore, the citations in the office action fail to even address the specific limitations of claim 31. Accordingly, Applicants submit that independent claim 31 is presently in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

In view of the above Amendments and Remarks, Applicants submit that all pending claims are presently in condition for allowance and a notice of allowance is respectfully requested. If a telephone conference may in any way advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is respectfully urged to contact the undersigned at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,
Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch LLP

Dated: February 28, 2005

By: 

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